



IFPRI ASIA



The paradoxical nature of Asia's current food situation makes it doubly challenging to create effective and long-term strategies for alleviating poverty and malnutrition in the region. On the one hand, life has improved for many Asians, with significant gains made in the past 30 years in per capita income and calorie consumption, leading many increasingly affluent Asians to diversify their diets and create an explosion in the demand for livestock products, fruits, vegetables, vegetable oils, and feedgrains. On the other hand, some 800 million Asians still live in poverty and 90 million preschool children remain malnourished.

The vast majority of those who are hungry still rely, directly or indirectly, on the agricultural sector for both food and their livelihoods, a dependency that places enormous pressure on natural resources. Further agricultural growth is needed to complete the economic transformation of rural Asia, but it must be more equitable and environmentally sustainable than it has been in the past. It must also capitalize on changing food consumption patterns in the region and on a growing global demand for diverse products.

Investment in infrastructure and in marketing and distribution systems will provide significant benefits to

those who depend on agriculture. However, a reliance on market forces alone may mean that many poorer regions and poor people are likely to be left behind. IFPRI has responded to the challenge by working to develop viable strategies in five key areas: making growth pro-poor, revitalizing agricultural research and technology dissemination, managing land and water scarcity and degradation, managing globalization, and building good governance and social capital.

This brochure highlights some of IFPRI's activities in South Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and across the continent.

IFPRI has long worked in South Asia, undertaking major projects on trade, markets, employment, nutrition, water, the adoption of agricultural technology, and other vital issues. Although the region has reduced the percentage of its population that is food and nutrition insecure, it remains home to the majority of the world's hungry and malnourished people.

South Asia Initiative

To address this challenge and take advantage of new opportunities, IFPRI launched the South Asia Initiative (SAI) in 2002, opened an office in New Delhi in 2005, and appointed a director in Asia in 2006.

The SAI pursues a three-pronged approach: it works with the Policy Analysis and Advisory Network for South Asia, a network of agricultural policymakers, advisors, and analysts, to promote effective policy dialogue; it facilitates collaborative research on key policy issues; and it works to strengthen local capacity.

Trade Liberalization and Food Security

Though until recently South Asian countries had policies that were protectionist at the border and interventionist within, many have implemented economic reforms to varying degrees. IFPRI's Markets, Trade, and Institutions Division (MTID) is analyzing the impact of the reforms on net food-importing versus net food-exporting countries, foodgrain marketing, and the integration of markets, as well as the role of safety nets in protecting the poorest peoples as reform unfolds.

Food Security, Nutrition, and Health

India's Integrated Child Development Services program (ICDS), which provides health and nutrition programs for children and pregnant and lactating mothers and is the world's largest program of its kind, has recently begun using locally produced food instead of imported food aid for its supplementary feeding programs. IFPRI's Food Consumption and Nutrition Division (FCND) is studying the nutritional implications and quality of local foods,



the operational challenges of the transition, the stability of the food supply, and the potential market and price effects of local procurement. A second phase of research, on strengthening social safety nets in the context of the ICDS, is also underway. FCND researchers are also studying the relative merits of food and cash transfer programs in improving the food security and livelihood of the ultra-poor in Bangladesh, and are evaluating a new program that encourages out-of-school children from the poorest segments of Bangladeshi society to attend non-formal, NGO-run schools. IFPRI's MTID, meanwhile, is examining Bangladesh's Public Food Distribution System, which distributes nearly 2 million tons of foodgrain each year.

South Asia Biosafety Program

Under this program, researchers from IFPRI's Environment and Production Technology Division (EPTD) are assessing the impact of biosafety and marketing regulations on the adoption and value of genetically modified (GM) crops in India and Bangladesh, and are analyzing how alternative regulations and policies are affecting the production, consumption, and imports/exports of GM and non-GM crops.

THE DRAGON AND THE ELEPHANT

China and India together account for 40 percent of the world's population. Both have implemented a series of economic reforms in the past two and a half decades: China initiated this process at the end of the 1970s with reforms in the agriculture sector and in rural areas, while India began in the early 1990s by liberalizing and reforming the manufacturing sector. The different reform paths have led to different growth rates and, more importantly, to different rates of poverty reduction. They also have fundamentally different implications for growth and poverty reduction in the future. IFPRI researchers have been examining key aspects of these reforms and their relationship to outcomes, and have hosted three international "Dragon and Elephant" conferences on China and India, most recently in July 2006.

Although China's economy has grown phenomenally in the last 25 years, there are still significant issues affecting the country's future development: regional income inequalities, land and water scarcity, environmental degradation, the impact of the World Trade Organization on rural smallholders, and diet change and the rise of nutrition-related diseases. To better address these issues, IFPRI established a China Program and opened a Beijing office in 2004 to focus on strategic policy research, capacity strengthening, and policy communication.

As part of the program, IFPRI's Development Strategy and Governance Division (DSGD) is working to assess China's development options in the region in order to determine how best to accelerate poverty reduction.

Regional Inequality

Rapid industrial development and urbanization in China is taking land away from agricultural production, threatening China's ability to feed itself, and making regional inequalities even starker. DSGD is seeking to understand the driving forces behind this rapid rural industrialization by conducting surveys in the coastal areas. It is also investigating why growth in the coast fails to spill over to the interior regions as expected.

Natural Resources/Environment

To protect the lands and resources that remain, IFPRI's DSGD is also assessing China's efforts to combat resource degradation, especially in western China where the loss of natural resources not only has a severe environmental impact, but threatens to slow

Southeast Asia is characterized by very rapid economic growth, increasing land and water degradation, and large pockets of rural poor. IFPRI has worked in the region—particularly in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam—for more than 20 years, assisting governments to devise alternative natural resource management policies, food marketing strategies, and other initiatives to help these countries cope with their significant and ongoing agricultural transformations.

Income Diversification

During the past 20 years, Vietnam has shifted from seeking to achieve rice self-sufficiency to maximizing rice production and exports to promoting crop and income diversification. Because diversification into high-value agricultural commodities is viewed as a key strategy to raise rural incomes and reduce rural poverty, IFPRI's Markets, Trade, and Institutions Division (MTID) is examining the process in the Northern Uplands region of Vietnam.

Contract Farming

MTID is also carrying out a study that compares contract and non-contract growers of selected horticultural crops and poultry in Thailand, Indonesia, China, and India. Working with local research institutes and universities, it is carrying out farm surveys and semi-structured interviews with processors and exporters to estimate the impact of contract farming on input use, productivity, and farm income; to test whether these variables are affected differently by local and foreign buyers; and to see whether contract farming has a pro-poor impact.

Fish Culture

In many river floodplain and lowland areas, the rainy season brings floods that last several months and make crop production impossible. However, enclosing parts of the floodwater areas can give rise to an alternative form of agricultural production: fish culture, which has the potential to provide more high-quality, nutrient-dense food production and



farm income for all rural stakeholders, especially the poor. Therefore, IFPRI's Environment and Production Technology Division (EPTD) is working with a number of partners in Vietnam, Cambodia, China, Bangladesh, India, and Mali to examine the potential of community-based fish culture.

Forestry

Indonesia's extensive and biologically diverse tropical forests support tens of millions of Indonesians who gather forest products for their daily needs or work in wood-processing sectors. However, illegal logging and agriculture-induced deforestation is believed to have destroyed some 10 million hectares of forest. Like some of its innovative counterparts in Latin America, the Indonesian government has initiated a program to encourage farmers to protect the remaining forests by offering them greater tenure security. EPTD is helping to examine the challenges confronting this Asian-modified payment for environmental services program by developing best practice models.

Credit Constraints and Pathways from Poverty

As part of the Pathways from Poverty program, researchers in the Food Consumption and Nutrition Division (FCND) are working in the Philippines to assess the effect of long-term credit constraints on asset accumulation, investment in human capital, and economic mobility, and to identify factors that contribute to movement out of poverty.

agricultural growth and further heighten rural poverty. As part of the project, IFPRI is preparing guidelines to help Chinese economists and policymakers determine the costs of land degradation and the potential socioeconomic benefits of conservation efforts.

Nutrition

Asia is undergoing a nutritional transition that is marked by a shift away from relatively monotonous diets of varying nutritional quality to industrial diets that are more varied and include more processed foods, more food of animal origin, more added sugar and fat, and more alcohol. This transition is accompanied by a shift away from infectious diseases toward chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, coronary heart disease, hypertension and stroke. IFPRI's Food Consumption and Nutrition Division

(FCND) will therefore examine the relationship between childhood nutritional status and overweight/obesity in China, and identify policy options to address excessive vegetable oil intake and diet-related chronic diseases.

Social Protection

Because social protection in China is becoming an issue of increasing policy importance, FCND is also working with partners to assess the effectiveness of a variety of social safety nets in rural areas of four provinces in China. This collaboration focuses on targeting effectiveness at the household level, determining the impact of these programs on consumption and labor supply, and identifying alternative targeting methods and programs that would help reduce poverty in rural China.

Achieving food and nutrition security is at the forefront of the development objectives of the Central Asian republics. Since independence, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have undergone a series of transitions from centrally planned economies to market-oriented systems. Despite great efforts by these countries and the advice of international and bilateral development agencies, policy reform has been frustrat-

ingly slow, agricultural productivity and performance have been declining, and food insecurity and malnutrition remain high. As part of the CGIAR's Central Asia and Caucasus systemwide program, IFPRI is therefore seeking to expand its research efforts in Central Asia, and its International Service for National Agricultural Research division (ISNAR) has embarked upon an initial phase of exploratory needs assessments.

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Global Open Food and Agriculture University

In collaboration with other centers supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), IFPRI seeks to translate CGIAR knowledge into effective capacity for agricultural development by reaching out to institutions of higher learning. Toward that end, IFPRI's International Service for National Agricultural Research division (ISNAR) is coordinating the CGIAR-wide Global Open Food and Agriculture University program, and has initiated joint activities with several traditional and distance-education universities to develop a collaborative platform for partnerships in high-quality postgraduate education.

National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Innovation Systems

ISNAR is also helping reform national agricultural research and extension institutions to meet the changing needs of agriculture. It is working with them to better organize and manage their research and extension systems, improve their capacity for institutional change and innovation, and organize themselves for improved science and technology policy.

Agricultural Science and Technology Indicators (ASTI)

IFPRI's ASTI initiative aims to compile, process, and make available data on institutional developments and investments in agricultural research and development (R&D) worldwide, and to analyze and report on these trends. In the Asia-Pacific region, the initiative conducted survey rounds with national and regional partners in 12 countries to obtain information on agricultural R&D trends, which appear in a series of country and regional reports.

Collective Action and Property Rights (CAPRI)

Institutions of collective action and property rights play an important role in determining how people use natural resources. In order to better understand the patterns of poor rural peoples' collective actions and the role of property rights in rural areas, IFPRI coordinates the CGIAR's system-wide CAPRI initiative, which conducts research in Asia and elsewhere. In Asia, CAPRI is supporting comparative work in the Philippines that examines the role of collective action in risk-smoothing.

Alternative Futures

With the expansion of cropland severely constrained, yield growth continuing to slow, and government budgets for agriculture set to further shrink, it is becoming increasingly vital to optimally allocate scarce financial and other resources to agriculture to support the rural poor. IFPRI's Environment and Production Technology Division

(EPTD) is analyzing alternative scenarios to 2050 that support sustainable pro-poor agricultural and economic growth. It is collaborating with research groups in China and India, the largest two developing-country food consumers and producers, to develop a comprehensive picture of the investment requirements of future agricultural development and the tradeoffs involved among alternative development paths.



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